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*Der Teufel in den deutschen geistlichen Spielen des Mittelalters und der Reformationszeit* von Dr. M. J. Rudwin. Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1915. [Hesperia: Schriften zur germanischen Philologie, 6.] xi + 194 pp.

In this work Dr. Rudwin has expanded his doctor's dissertation, *Die Teufelsszenen im geistlichen Drama des deutschen Mittelalters*, into a study on very broad lines of the rôle of the devil in religious drama and the creator of this rôle: the German people of the Middle Ages, "Denn wie wir ein Volk durch seinen Gottesbegriff kennen lernen, so können wir auch anderseits ein Volk nach seinem Teufel beurteilen." (Page v.) The reader is left, for the most part, to draw his own conclusions; but the author has furnished ample material, painstakingly and attractively arranged, and, in spite of the fact that some unpublished manuscripts have not been consulted, there is probably little or nothing to add to the description of the devil and his surroundings as far as religious drama is concerned. It is a matter for regret, however, that from the beginning of critical investigation of medieval drama a strong line of demarcation and division has been drawn between religious and non-religious plays, in spite of the fact that the one kind merges almost imperceptibly into the other. Convenient as it may be to limit a field of investigation in this way, yet the art of drama is so unified, the reciprocal influence of religious and non-religious plays, as of tragedy and comedy, is so strong that to leave one out of consideration when treating the other is to run the risk of not being entirely clear or complete. Thus Dr. Rudwin correctly points out that the devil in religious plays is a character borrowed from the Bible and the Apocrypha, resting on Christian tradition, and that the devil, as he appears at first in these plays, is by no means the buffoon of the old Germanic folk festivals; yet he adds that the devil owes his origin indirectly to these same heathen festivities in which a kind of devil's mumming can be traced back to the ninth century, although, as he says elsewhere it would be a mistake to consider the devil as merely the successor of the fun maker in the Feast of Fools or as the predecessor of the *Hanswurst* or *Pickelhering*. One cannot help feeling, however, that had Dr. Rudwin included in his investigations such plays as the *Neidhartspiele* he could have answered more completely the question of the interrelationships among the comic characters in the old folk festivals, the

Germanic and the Christian devils, and the later *Hanswurst*. In the devil scene in the *Neidhartspiel* the devil presents a curious mixed rôle of villain and buffoon which offers interesting material for the investigation of the devil in religious plays in his relations to comic characters in profane plays, especially as this scene shows the influence not only of religious drama but also of the secular *Fastnachtspiel*.

In regard to the growth of the element of comedy in this rôle, it is pointed out that not only was the appearance of the devil grotesque and grimly humorous, but that from the defeats suffered by this enemy of God and man sprang the impression of stupidity which would easily arouse scornful laughter. That the devil was at first purely a villain is probably the most important factor in the development of this character into a comic figure. It may be added that the comic element is an inevitable outgrowth of the villain character, which, by the very fact that it is a caricature of the ideal, is bound to have a grotesque and humorous element which rises to the surface sometimes in spite of the playwright. The Jew of Malta and Shylock are excellent examples of rôles in which the villain and comic elements are so inseparable that the general effect depends upon the interpretation of the actor and the mood of the audience. In view of this close relationship between the villain and the comic characters, perhaps Dr. Rudwin will at some future time investigate the question of the rôle of the devil in medieval comedy and complete this work so well begun.

In regard to the religious drama, Dr. Rudwin has clearly shown the overwhelming importance of the rôle of the devil, the character which "ties the knot of the greatest world tragedy." As he says, without the devil in religious drama there would have been no drama. In other words, true dramatic action arose only when the devil ranged himself as an antagonist. Until that time there had been only a show or spectacle. The rôle of the devil is, therefore, of the utmost importance in the development of medieval technique of the drama, for in spite of many assertions to the contrary, the drama of that period had a technique of its own; and investigators of that subject will find this book very helpful and suggestive. In tracing the development of the rôle, Dr. Rudwin inclines to the theory that the devil first appeared in the scene of the *Descent into Hell*, although the first extant play in which a devil appears is the twelfth century *Sponsus*. With the growth of

the Easter Play into the Passion Play is commensurate the growth of the devil's rôle, developing from a passive secondary character into an active character of the first rank. The development of the rôle is traced as the different scenes are added to the cycle of the Passion Play until, with the inclusion of the episodes of the Fall of Man and the Last Judgment, the devil "appears as the Alpha and Omega of the Christian world system."

A careful study is made of the rôle of the devil in all of the scenes in which he appears. In each case the theological or biblical foundations for the part are given; the source of the rôle is indicated and its development is traced; the contents of the scene are fully described; the number of verses in each scene in which the devil plays a part, and the different names applied to the devils are tabulated; the professions and the social status of the souls in Hell are given. Thus these scenes in Hell, especially, as the author points out, are a humorous satire on the social and religious life on earth. They also contain, perhaps unconsciously, the moral of the play.

The stage setting of Hell is found to be far more simple than in French plays of this period, there being no subdivision of the scene to indicate the different localities in Hell, such as Limbo. At times even the interior of the scene is not shown, but the action took place in front of the entrance where the wine vat, on which the devil sat, was placed. Dr. Rudwin rejects correctly the theory of the stage built up in three stories of which the lower represented Hell, but he admits that the setting for Hell may well have been on a slightly lower level than the stage proper. This is in all probability the correct view; but, as this is one of the vexed questions of the system of medieval stage decoration, we wish that evidence upon which this conclusion is based had been given.

In connection with the stage setting of Hell on the German stage, Dr. Rudwin takes up the question of the *dolium* or wine vat upon which the devil sits enthroned in his realm, and disagrees with the generally accepted view that the *dolium* was a kind of improvised, symbolic setting for the Hell scene. "Das Dolium," he says, "war nichts mehr als der Standort des Hauptteufels, der Thron des Höllenfürsten, den himmlischen Thron parodierend." This stage property, however, seems to have had a different signification from that given it by Dr. Rudwin and the other commentators on the subject. In the Vulgate, Revelation xiv, 19-20

reads as follows: Misit igitur angelus falcem suam acutam in terram et vindemiavit vineam terrae et misit in lacum irae Dei magnum et calcatus est lacus extra civitatem, etc. The word *lacus* means, especially in classical Latin, a vat into which wine flowed from the press. DuCange, however, gives only *piscina* as the meaning of *lacus* in medieval Latin; but for *dolium* he gives *cupa major*, *lacus vinarius*. He cites from the Charta of Bishop Gebhart (1222) a passage in which the word *dolium* is used for the classical Latin *lacus*, or wine vat. The *dolium* of the stage directions in these plays is, therefore, evidently medieval Latin for *lacus* and, in all probability, refers to the wine vat of the wrath of God in this passage of the Bible, or wine press, as the King James version translates it. Since a series of illustrations of this vision, having their origin, according to M. Mâle,<sup>1</sup> in the Wittenberg Bible (1522), shows only the angels gathering and pressing the grapes in the vat, the question may be raised as to the symbolism of the devil in this connection. The answer lies in a miniature of the early 14th century, in a Latin and French manuscript of the Apocalypse, which also illustrates these verses.<sup>2</sup> An angel is cutting the vines and is handing the grapes to a devil seated on the wine press of the wrath of God. That in this miniature the *lacus* is a medieval wine press and not a vat need not trouble us. The artist has merely committed a common anachronism. We plainly have, then, in art a tradition of a *dolium*, representing symbolically the wrath of God, serving as a seat for the devil. This symbolism of medieval iconography was probably adopted on the stage without question and perhaps without clear knowledge of its full significance, just as many a piece of stage setting, especially for the Hell scene, was copied bodily from some plastic representation of the same subject. Thus it would not be surprising if this bit of symbolism, having developed into a mere stage tradition, was never referred to in the lines of the plays themselves, especially as the interpretations of the Apocalypse were constantly varying and changing entirely. In this connection it may be suggested that Dr. Rudwin could find at least corroborative evidence for many of his conclusions in the iconography of the Middle Ages. Indeed, it would be well worth while to investigate the plastic representation of the Descent into

<sup>1</sup> E. Mâle, *L'art religieux de la fin du moyen âge en France*. Paris, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> British Museum Add. MS. 17333, f. 28. See: *Reproductions from Illuminated Manuscripts in the British Museum*. 1910.

Hell scene—probably of Byzantine origin—and the Last Judgment scene with reference to the questions of priority and their general conception, as a means of throwing light on the introduction of the rôle of the devil and the development of the Passion Play. As the present writer has tried to show,<sup>3</sup> influence was not merely exerted on the art of the Middle Ages by contemporary stage setting according to the view of M. Mâle, but there was at least as strong an influence in the other direction. With his wide knowledge of the devil on the stage, Dr. Rudwin might well investigate the question of the reciprocal influence of art and drama on the representation of the devil.

The second part of the book is devoted to a study of the devil and all of his activities as reflected by the religious drama. This is the most original and the most valuable part of this interesting monograph. From the passive rôle in the Descent into Hell scene or from the mute rôle in the *Sponsus* the character of the devil develops, subdivides, and one may say propagates itself, until there is a whole realm of evil spirits with Lucifer in command, Satan as his lieutenant, and the lesser devils in attendance. Nor are these devils all of one piece. A keen analysis shows the difference in character between Lucifer and Satan and the lesser demons. The author also explains their relations to the medieval man, woman, and priest, and with the heavenly powers. He shows that much of the character of the devil can be explained by the fact that the rôle develops as a contrast to and as the reverse side of the heroic rôle, that the devil is the *simia Dei*. Indeed, almost everything appertaining to the divine power is caricatured in this interesting personification of the power of evil. Nothing seems to have been omitted which tends to elucidate the conception of the devil in the Middle Ages in Germany. Full details are given of what may be called the daily life of the inhabitants of Hell, their speech, occupations, food, dances, songs, etc., being carefully described. After reading this book one is convinced that the same methods may well be applied to a study of the devil in the drama of the Middle Ages in England and France. Only it is to be hoped that all forms of drama, not merely plays on religious subjects, will be employed as material for such investigation in the future.

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<sup>3</sup> *Romanic Review*, IV, No. 3.